

Hello,

I am writing to support this bill HB 6975, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS. I am a resident of Fairfield County, town of Sherman.

There are numerous instances of contradictory actions taken by various school districts within the state of Connecticut with regard to how the "required" food allergy policies are written and enforced. It should not take hiring a lawyer to ensure access to a safe educational environment for a child who has life threatening food allergies. However, the political environment in many towns in Connecticut then dictates that be necessary. My husband and I have experienced public harassment and online adult bullying in our small town as a result of our proactive efforts to advocate for a more proactive and inclusive allergy policy for our district, prior to our anaphylactic daughter's impending enrollment. One of our school board members (who has since resigned) actually started an online petition against the nut-free snack procedure the elementary (K-8) principal tried to implement in a past year, claiming that it was not fair to non-allergic children, and as a result the procedure was then rescinded by the BOE against the wishes of the principal. These negative attitudes by the other parents trickle down to their children and then impact our children. I have heard story upon story just like ours from parents around Connecticut. It should not be up to proactive "allergy parents" who happen to reside in the town to put strong policies in place, or hire lawyers to force changes to the overall school environment through the 504 process, nor should it be left to nurses/administrators/BOEs who have varying levels of "tolerance" for the inevitable public storm of angry non-allergy parents who feel that kids with allergies infringe upon their rights. Clear cut guidelines for best practices that school districts would be required to integrate into their allergy policies would take the public pressure off the parents of allergic children. Parents acting as advocates should not be forced to put their child's disability up for public comment.

I would also like to volunteer to be considered for the task force if you are taking names at this time.

Thank you.
Jennifer Freed